DC
SUICIDE SQUAD
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SUICIDE SQUAD:
THE PHOENIX GAMBIT
PART 1 OF 4
FREE POSTER INSIDE!

PART ONE:

ASHES

ONE YEAR LATER...

JOHN OSTRANDER / KIM YALE, WRITERS · GEOF ISHERWOOD, ARTIST · TODD KLEIN, LETTERER · CARL GAFFORD, COLORIST · DAN RASPLER, EDITOR

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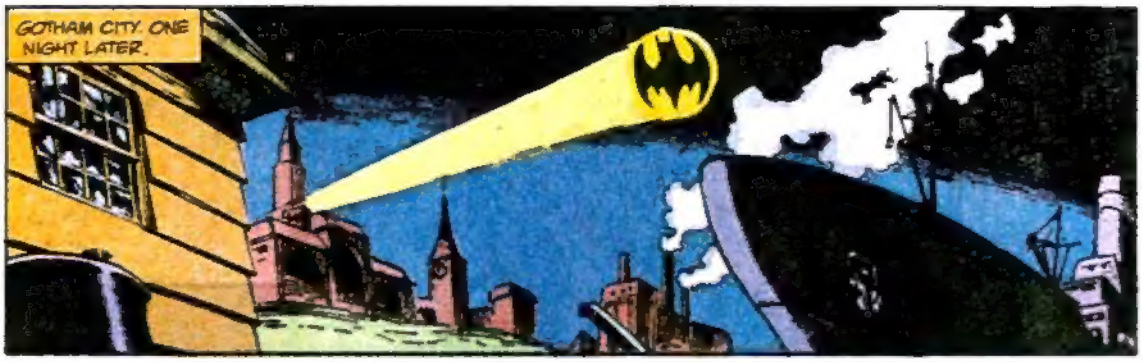
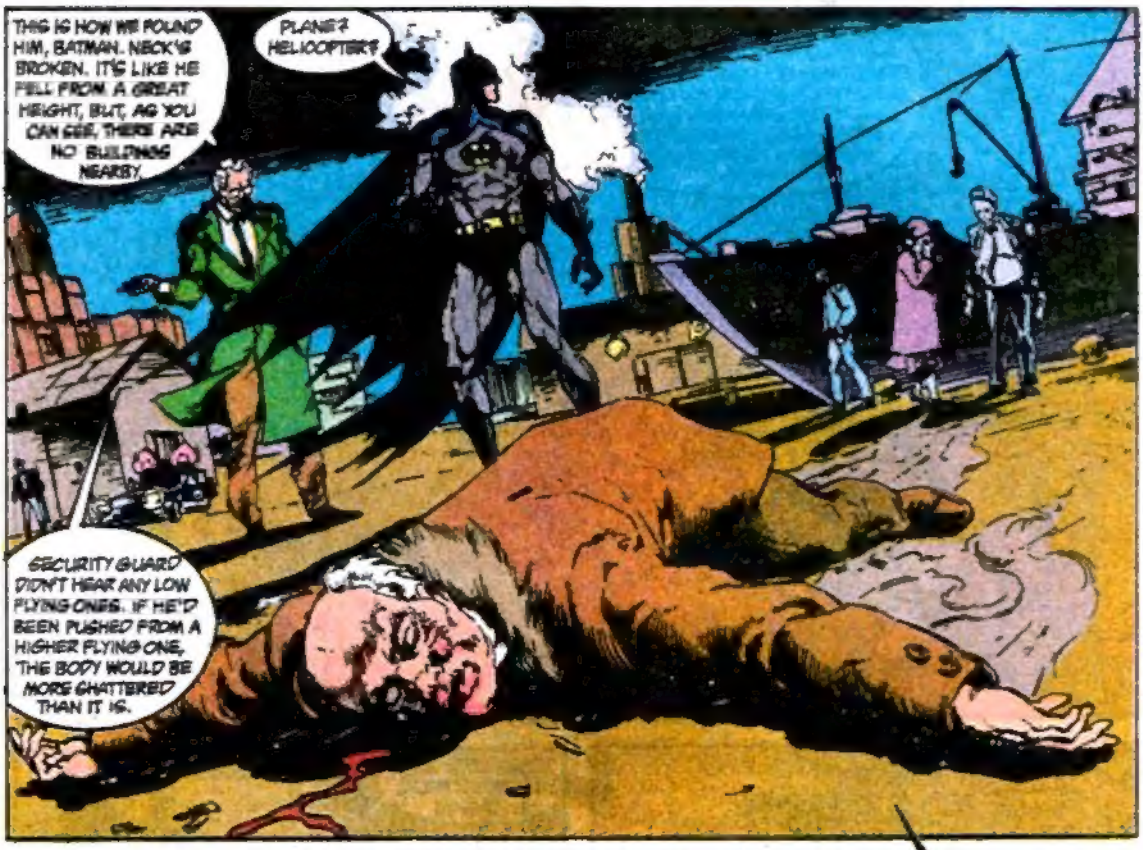
G-55OB

KLAK KLAK K
WALLER.
STEEL.
TIRED OF PRISON?
WHAT DO YOU WANT, STEEL?
Y'KNOW, THERE'S SOME PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT WHO THINK YOU GOT A RAW DEAL. THAT THE LOA WOULD HAVE SUCCEEDED--IF NOT FOR YOU. THAT YOU DESERVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN A PRISON CELL FOR WHAT YOU DID.
MAYBE I'M ONE.
WE'VE GOT A LITTLE JOB--NOTHING FANCY--THAT COULD USE YOUR INPUT.
TAKE THE JOB, SUCCEED, SURVIVE--WELL, YOU KNOW THE RIFF. AFTER ALL, YOU WROTE IT.
INTERESTED?

YOU'RE HERE SOONER THAN I EXPECTED, STEEL. JOB MUST BE ESPECIALLY NASTY AND YOU FOLKS MUST BE ESPECIALLY DESPERATE.
WE'RE GOING TO START THIS LITTLE NEGOTIATING SESSION OVER AND THIS TIME I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU MY TERMS.
NOT A CHANCE
YOU THINK ABOUT IT, COME BACK WHEN YOU'RE READY TO REALLY TALK
I'LL BE RIGHT HERE.

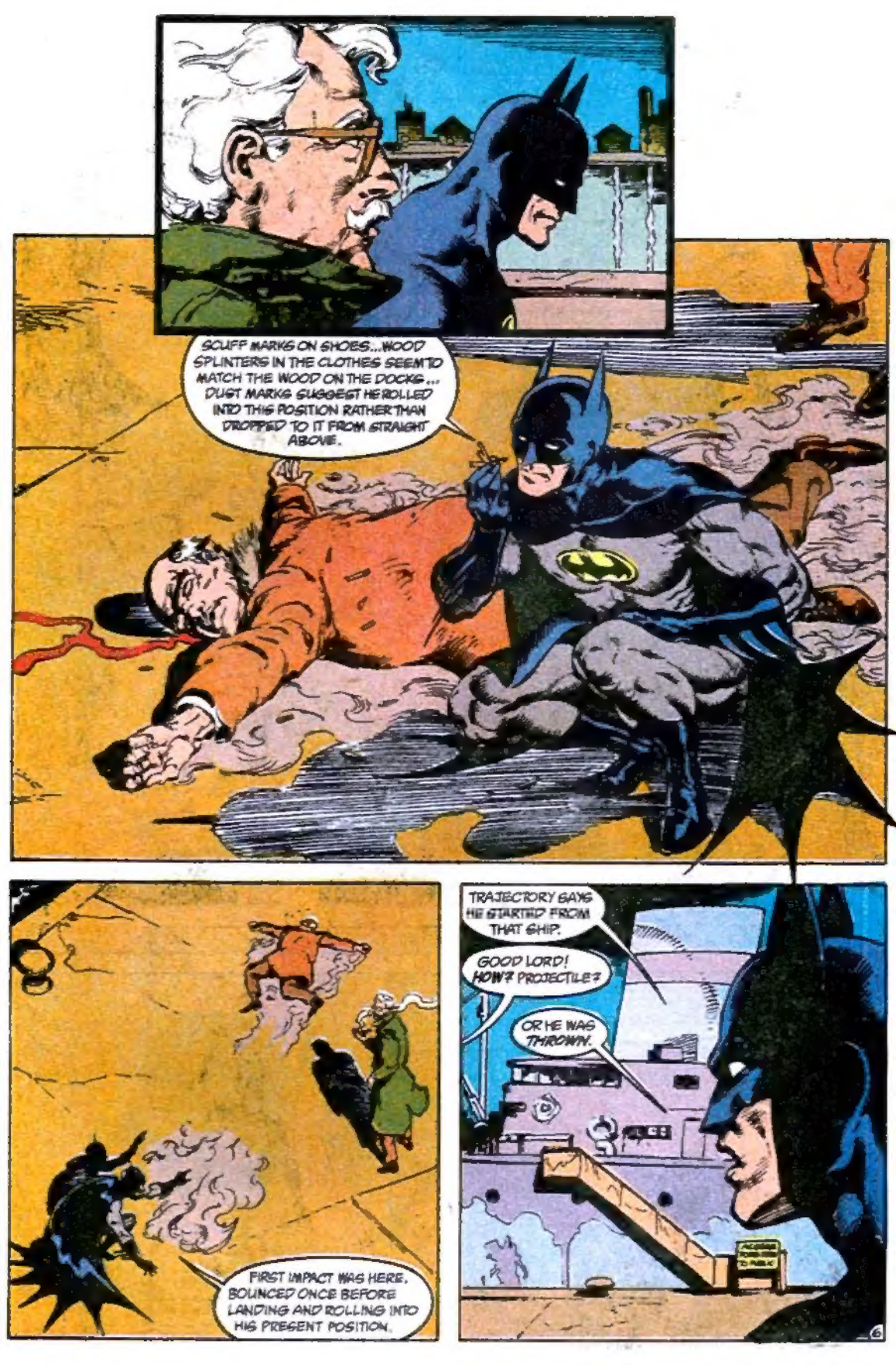
WELL? HOW DID IT GO?
FORGET IT. SHE SAW THROUGH IT ALL IN A SECOND.
TOLD YOU SHE WOULD.
WE'LL HAVE TO TRY TO DEAL WITH THIS WHOLE VLATAVAN THING THROUGH REGULAR CHANNELS AND HOPE IT DOESN'T BLOW UP IN OUR FACES.
CLIK
STEEL'S STYMIED. OUR PLANS CAN CONTINUE. YOU READY TO PROCEED WITH THE CONTRACT?
SURE. WHY NOT?
CLAK


GOTHAM CITY. ONE NIGHT LATER.


THIS IS HOW WE FOUND HIM, BATMAN. NECK'S BROKEN. IT'S LIKE HE FELL FROM A GREAT HEIGHT, BUT, AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE NO BUILDINGS NEARBY.
PLANE? HELICOPTER?
SECURITY GUARD DIDN'T HEAR ANY LOW FLYING ONES. IF HE'D BEEN PUSHED FROM A HIGHER FLYING ONE, THE BODY WOULD BE MORE SHATTERED THAN IT IS.

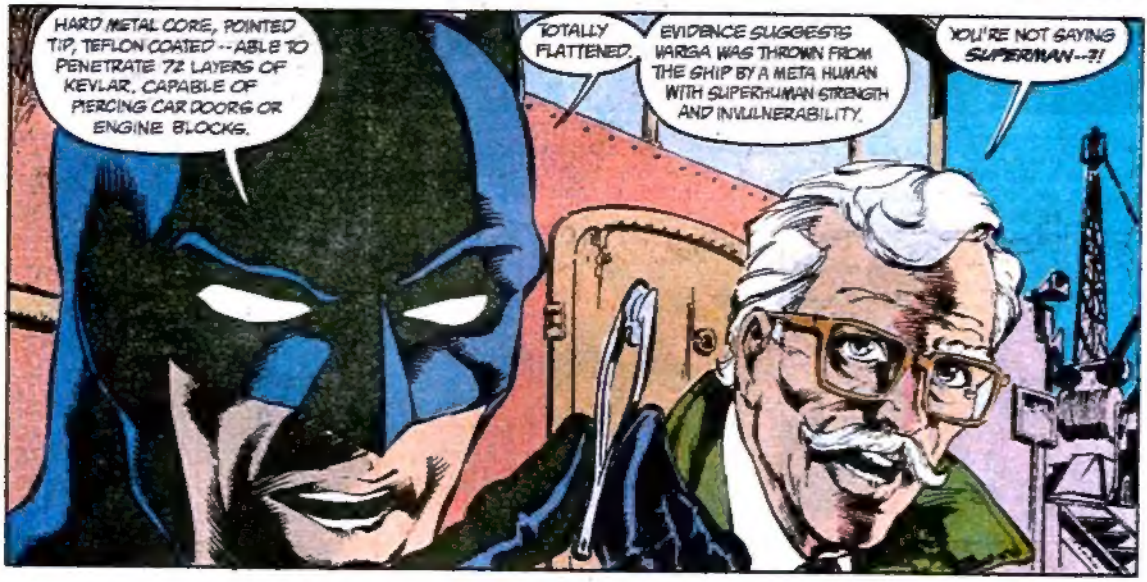
THE VICTIM'S NAME IS NIKOLAS VARSA. OWNS THE SHIPPING YARDS HERE.
FORMER VLATAVAN NATIONAL, CAME OVER TO THE STATES JUST BEFORE WORLD WAR TWO. MADE HIMSELF A PRETTY BUNDLE WITH THESE SHIPS.

I'VE MET HIM. STRONG MAN.


SCUFF MARKS ON SHOES...WOOD SPLINTERS IN THE CLOTHES SEEM TO MATCH THE WOOD ON THE DOCKS... DUST MARKS SUGGEST HE ROLLED INTO THIS POSITION RATHER THAN DROPPED TO IT FROM STRAIGHT ABOVE.
FIRST IMPACT WAS HERE. BOUNCED ONCE BEFORE LANDING AND ROLLING INTO HIS PRESENT POSITION.
TRAJECTORY SAYS HE STARTED FROM THAT SHIP.
GOOD LORD! HOW? PROJECTILE?
OR HE WAS THROWN.

NO CRANE, NO CATAPULT, NO GUN OF ANY KIND IN SIGHT. OR ARE YOU SUGGESTING SOMEONE THREW VARGA?
ACCESS FORBIDDEN TO PUBLIC

YES. LOOK AT THIS--A .44 MAGNUM SLUG.

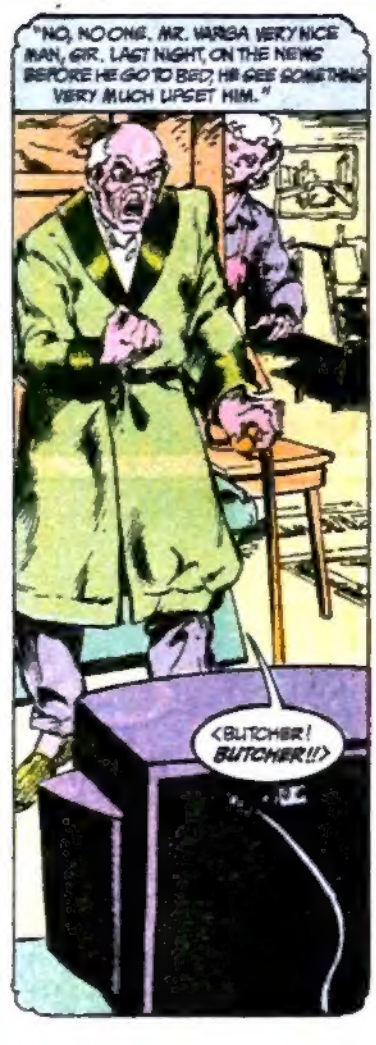

HARD METAL CORE, POINTED TIP, TEFLON COATED--ABLE TO PENETRATE 72 LAYERS OF KEVLAR. CAPABLE OF PIERCING CAR DOORS OR ENGINE BLOCKS.
TOTALLY FLATTENED.
EVIDENCE SUGGESTS VARGA WAS THROWN FROM THE SHIP BY A META HUMAN WITH SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH AND INVULNERABILITY.
YOU'RE NOT SAYING SUPERMAN--?!

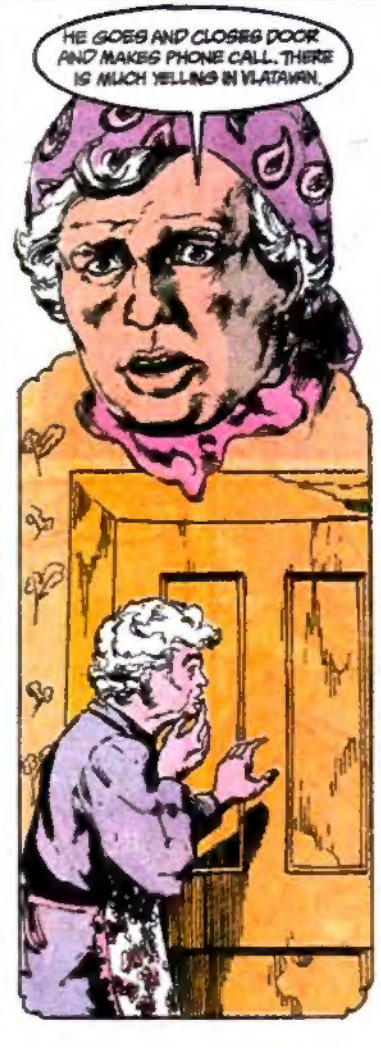
JIM, IF SUPERMAN THREW VARGA, THE BODY'D BE IN SEATTLE.
I WANT TO TALK TO YOUR WITNESSES. A FEW THINGS STILL AREN'T CLEAR.

A FEW?! SUCH AG?
WHERE'S THE GUN?

YOU SAY YOU DIDN'T KNOW MR. VARGA WAS IN THE SHIPYARD?
NO SIR, I SURE DIDN'T. I HEARD SOME SHOTS AND COME OVER HERE TO INVESTIGATE AND FOUND THE BODY -- JUST LIKE YOU SEE IT--AND I CALLED MY SUPERVISOR AND THE POLICE. SAW NOBODY ELSE.

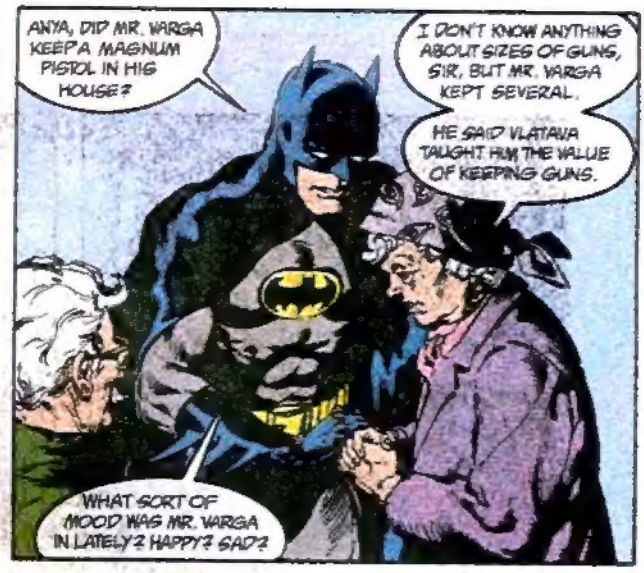
THIS IS MR. VARGA'S HOUSEKEEPER, BATMAN-- ANYA KOLCHAK. SHE IDENTIFIED THE BODY FOR US.
CAN YOU THINK OF ANYONE WHO WOULD WANT MR. VARGA DEAD, ANYA?


"NO, NO ONE. MR. VARGA VERY NICE MAN, SIR. LAST NIGHT, ON THE NEWS BEFORE HE GO TO BED, HE SEE SOMETHING VERY MUCH UPSET HIM."
<BUTCHER! BUTCHER!!>


HE GOES AND CLOSES DOOR AND MAKES PHONE CALL. THERE IS MUCH YELLING IN VLATAVAN.

"THEN HE COMES OUT ALL DRESSED AND SLAMS OUT THE FRONT DOOR!"
GO TO BED, ANYA! I'LL BE GONE LATE!

AND THEN THE POLICE COME AND WAKE ME UP AND ASK ME TO COME WITH THEM AND I FIND POOR MR. VARGA AS YOU SEE HIM NOW.

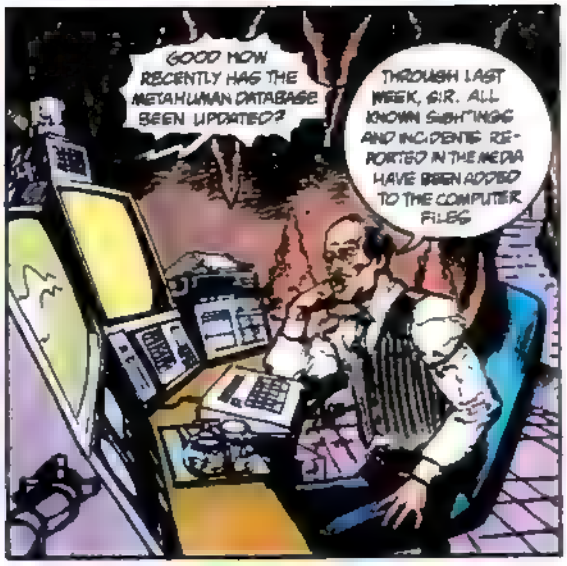

ANYA, DID MR. VARGA KEEP A MAGNUM PISTOL IN HIS HOUSE?
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT SIZES OF GUNS, SIR, BUT MR. VARGA KEPT SEVERAL.
HE SAID VLATAVA TAUGHT HIM THE VALUE OF KEEPING GUNS.
WHAT SORT OF MOOD WAS MR. VARGA IN LATELY? HAPPY? SAD?

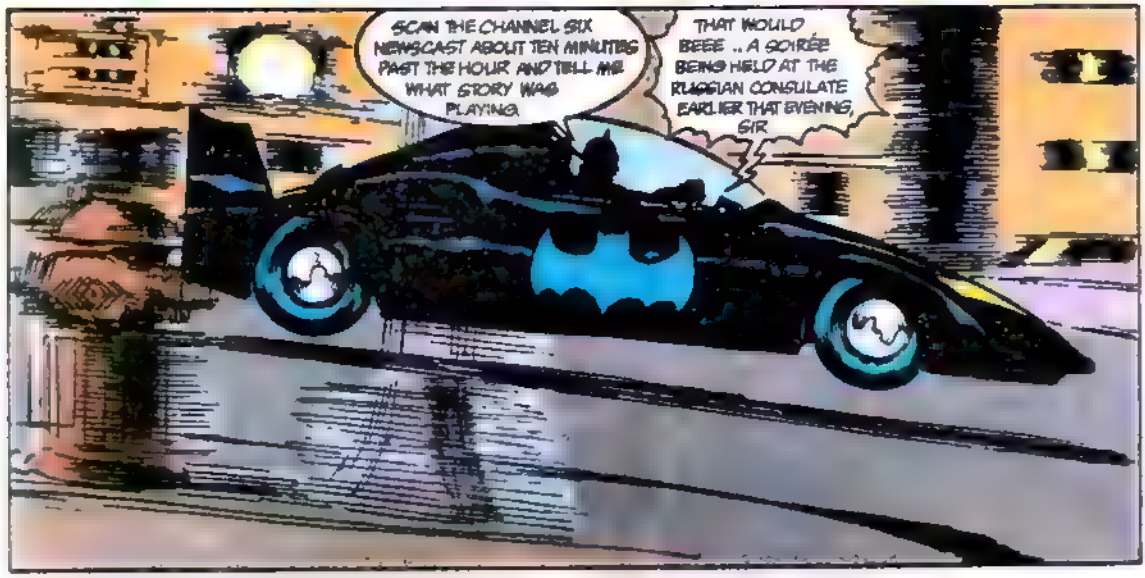
WELL, MR. VARGA WAS GENERALLY VERY SECRETIVE ABOUT HIS OWN BUSINESS. BUT LATELY HE SEEMED MOST EXCITED ABOUT SOMETHING HE WAS WORKING ON.
ONE LAST QUESTION, ANYA -- WHICH CHANNEL WAS MR. VARGA WATCHING AND WHAT TIME WAS IT WHEN HE GOT SO UPSET?
MR. VARGA ALWAYS WATCHED CHANNEL SIX, SIR -- HE LIKED THE YOUNG ANCHORWOMAN THERE A GREAT DEAL. I THINK IT WAS ABOUT TEN MINUTES PAST THE HOUR.
THANK YOU, ANYA -- YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP.

WELL?!
I HAVE ONE OR TWO IDEAS BUT I NEED TO CHECK SOME DATA. I'LL GET BACK IN TOUCH AS SOON AS I'VE CONFIRMED A FEW THINGS.

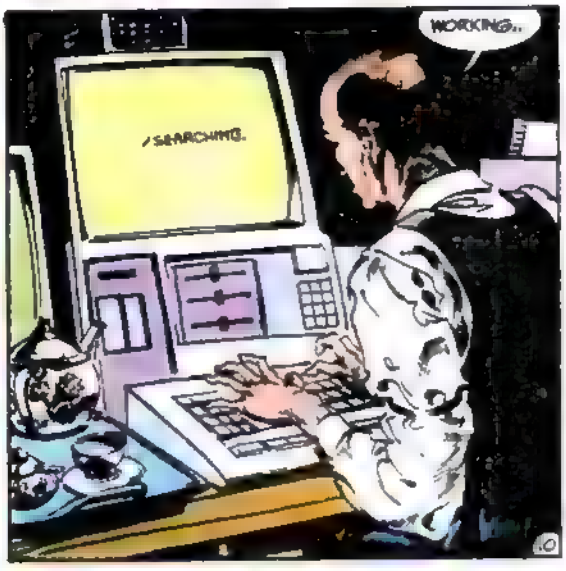
FINE. DON'T TELL ME ANYTHING.
AFTER ALL, I'M ONLY THE POLICE COMMISSIONER...

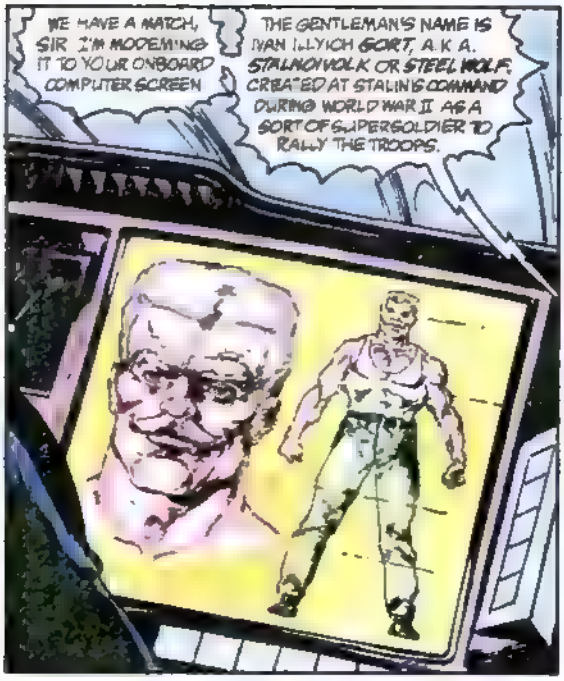
ALFRED, DID YOU TAPE LAST NIGHT'S NEWS BROADCASTS?
I VIDEOTAPED THEM ALL, SIR, AS I DO EVERY NIGHT

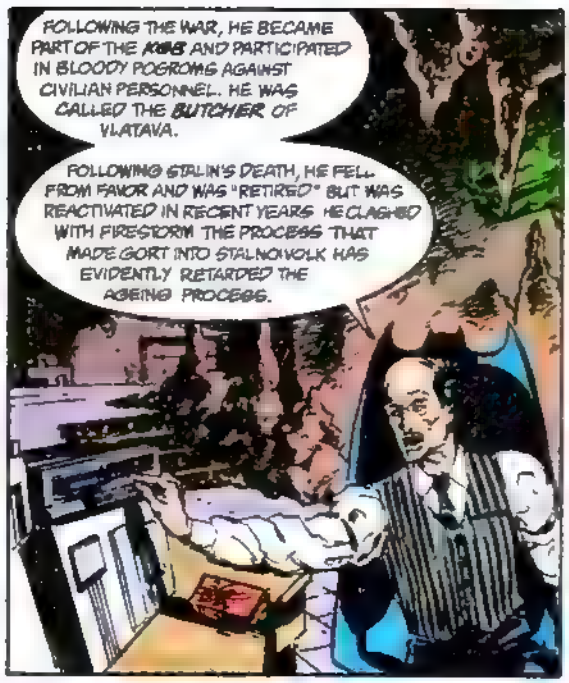

GOOD NOW RECENTLY HAS THE METAHUMAN DATABASE BEEN UPDATED?
THROUGH LAST WEEK, SIR. ALL KNOWN SIGHTINGS AND INCIDENTS REPORTED IN THE MEDIA HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE COMPUTER FILES

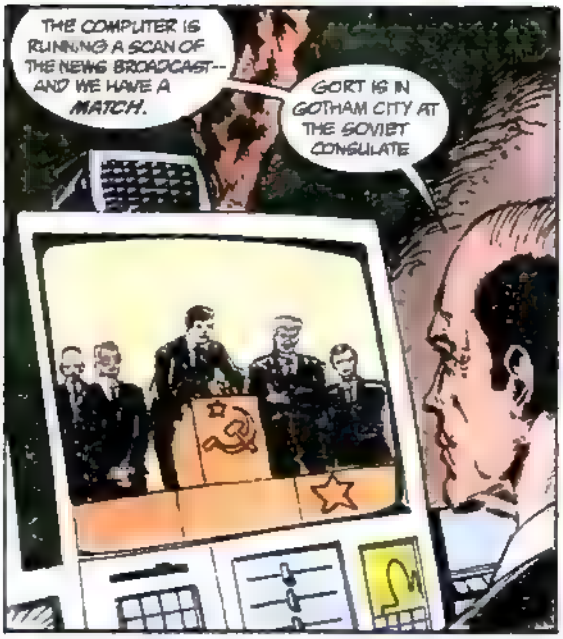

SCAN THE CHANNEL SIX NEWSCAST ABOUT TEN MINUTES PAST THE HOUR AND TELL ME WHAT STORY WAS PLAYING.
THAT WOULD BEEE .. A SOIRÉE BEING HELD AT THE RUSSIAN CONSULATE EARLIER THAT EVENING, SIR.

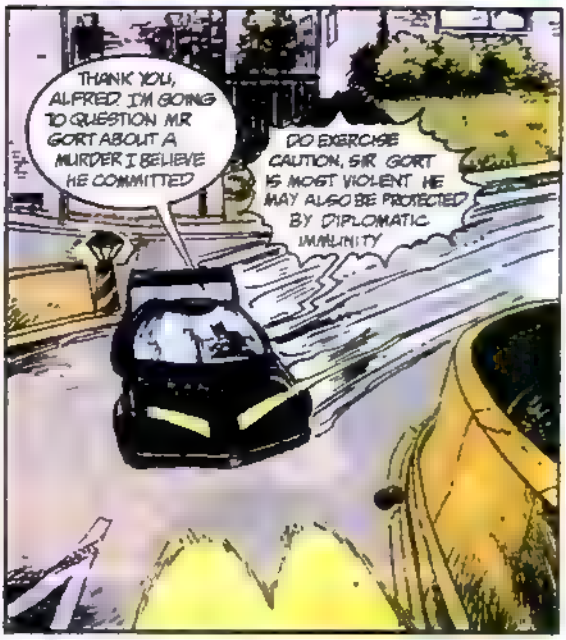
SEARCH THE DATABASE FOR METAHUMANS ALONG THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS: --SUPER STRENGTH WITHIN A RANGE OF FIVE TO TEN TIMES NORMAL HUMAN, INVULNERABILITY GREATER THAN 100 LAYERS OF KEVLAR, RUSSIAN, CONNECTION TO VLATAVA.


WORKING..
/SEARCHING.


WE HAVE A MATCH, SIR I'M MODEMING IT TO YOUR ONBOARD COMPUTER SCREEN
THE GENTLEMAN'S NAME IS IVAN ILLYICH GORT, A.K.A. STALNOVOLK OR STEEL WOLF. CREATED AT STALIN'S COMMAND DURING WORLD WAR II AS A SORT OF SUPERSOLDIER TO RALLY THE TROOPS.

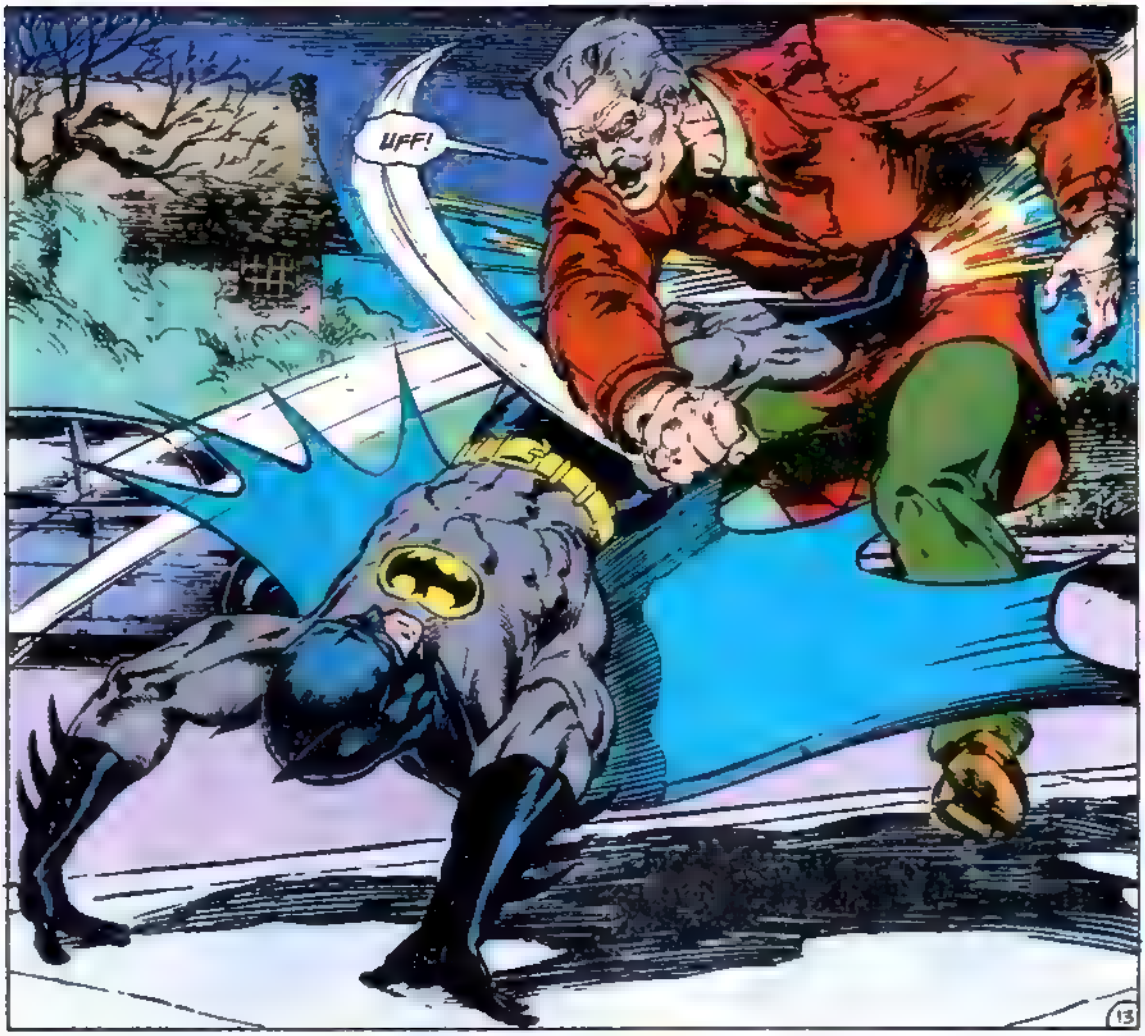

FOLLOWING THE WAR, HE BECAME PART OF THE KGB AND PARTICIPATED IN BLOODY POGROMS AGAINST CIVILIAN PERSONNEL. HE WAS CALLED THE BUTCHER OF VLATAVA.
FOLLOWING STALIN'S DEATH, HE FELL FROM FAVOR AND WAS "RETIRED" BUT WAS REACTIVATED IN RECENT YEARS. HE CLASHED WITH FIRESTORM. THE PROCESS THAT MADE GORT INTO STALNOVOLK HAS EVIDENTLY RETARDED THE AGEING PROCESS.


THE COMPUTER IS RUNNING A SCAN OF THE NEWS BROADCAST-- AND WE HAVE A MATCH.
GORT IS IN GOTHAM CITY AT THE SOVIET CONSULATE

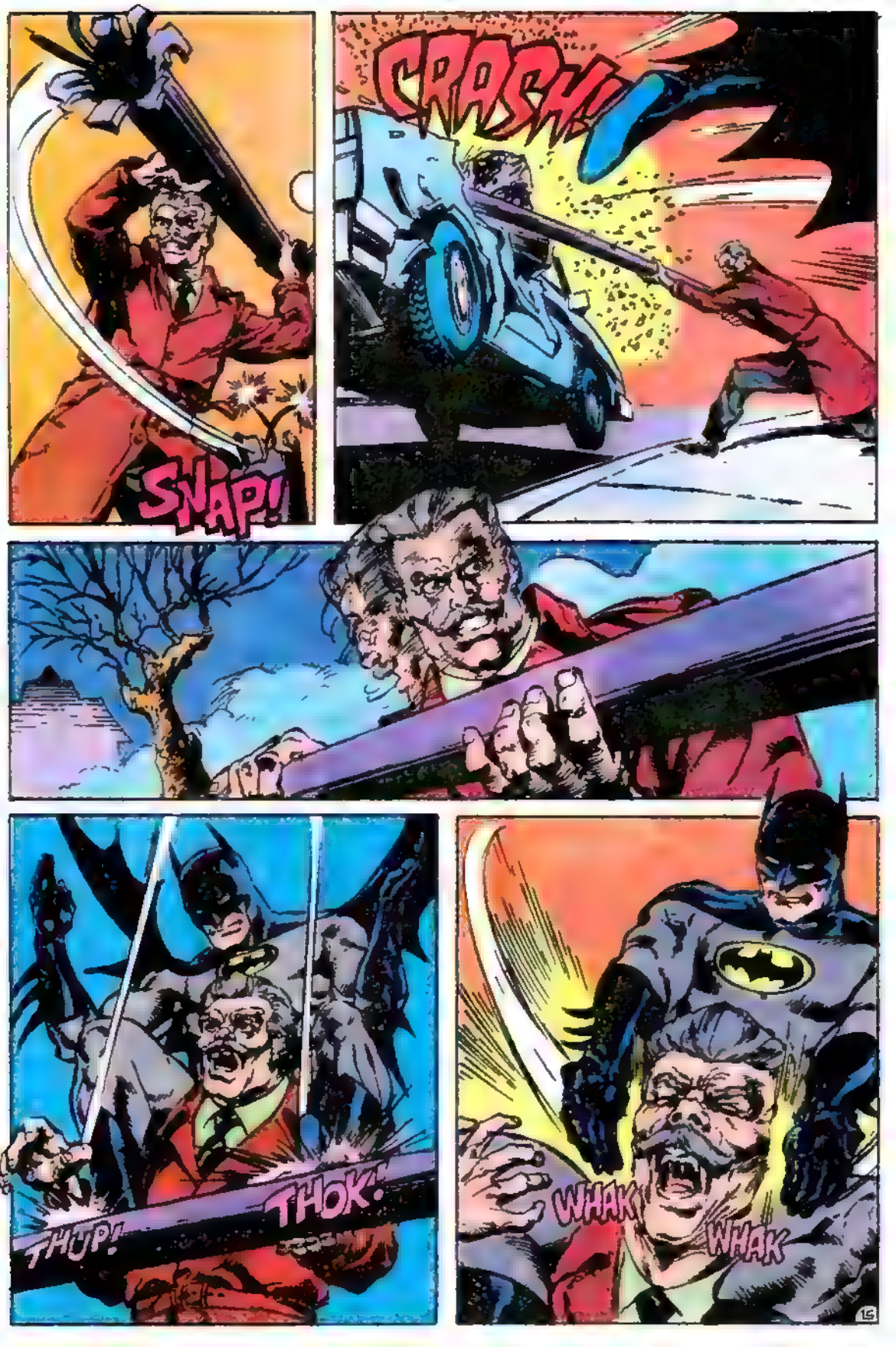

THANK YOU, ALFRED. I'M GOING TO QUESTION MR GORT ABOUT A MURDER I BELIEVE HE COMMITTED
DO EXERCISE CAUTION, SIR. GORT IS MOST VIOLENT. HE MAY ALSO BE PROTECTED BY DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

NOT FROM ME

NO PARKING DIPLOMATIC CORPS
BUTCHER
IVAN ILLYICH GORT, A K A THE BUTCHER OF VLATAVA AN OLD MAN RECOGNIZED YOU ON THE TELEVISION AND REMEMBERED A VOW OF VENGEANCE
HE HAD NO FAITH IN THE SYSTEM BUT HE HAD FAITH IN MODERN TECHNOLOGY. HE THOUGHT TEFLON BULLETS WOULD PENETRATE YOUR SKIN
TELL ME THAT YOU DIDN'T INTEND TO KILL HIM TELL ME YOU WERE TRYING TO GET RID OF HIM
I DIDN'T CARE


UFF!

KRUNK!
CHENK
SSSSSS

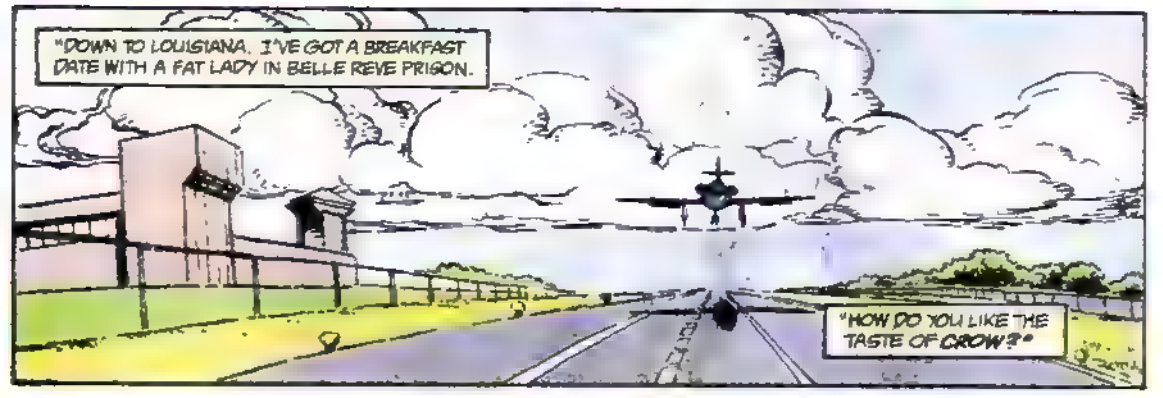

SNAP!
CRASH!
THUP!
THOK!
WHAK!
WHAK

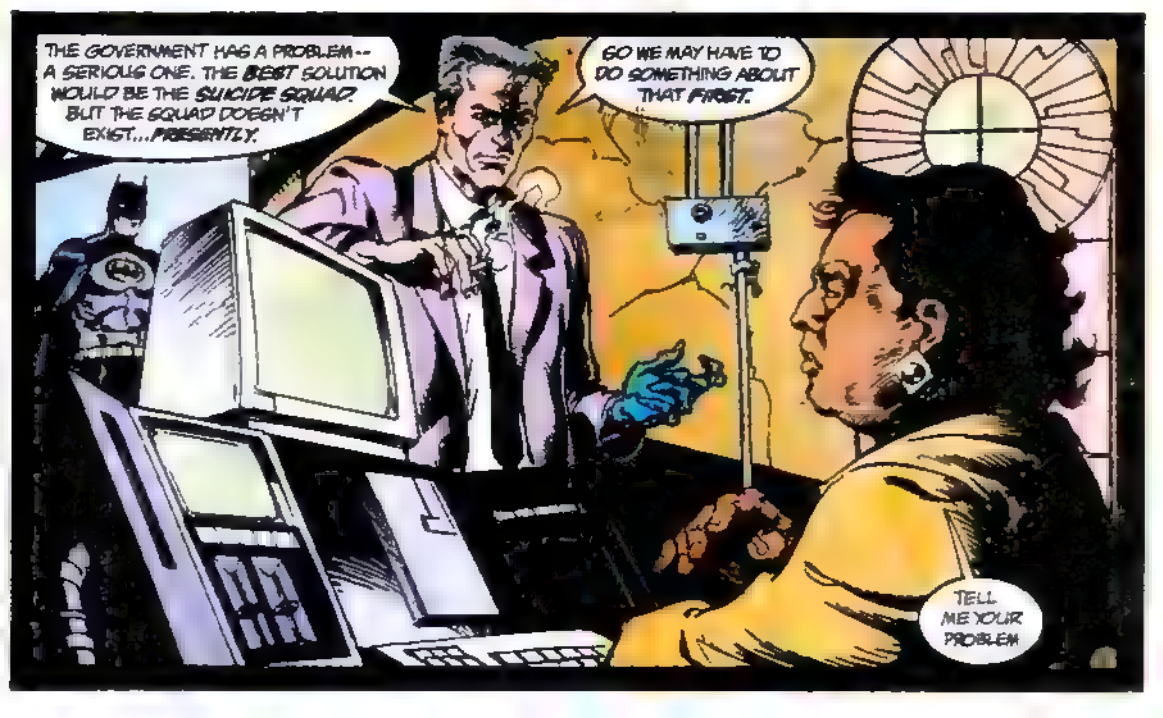
THUD

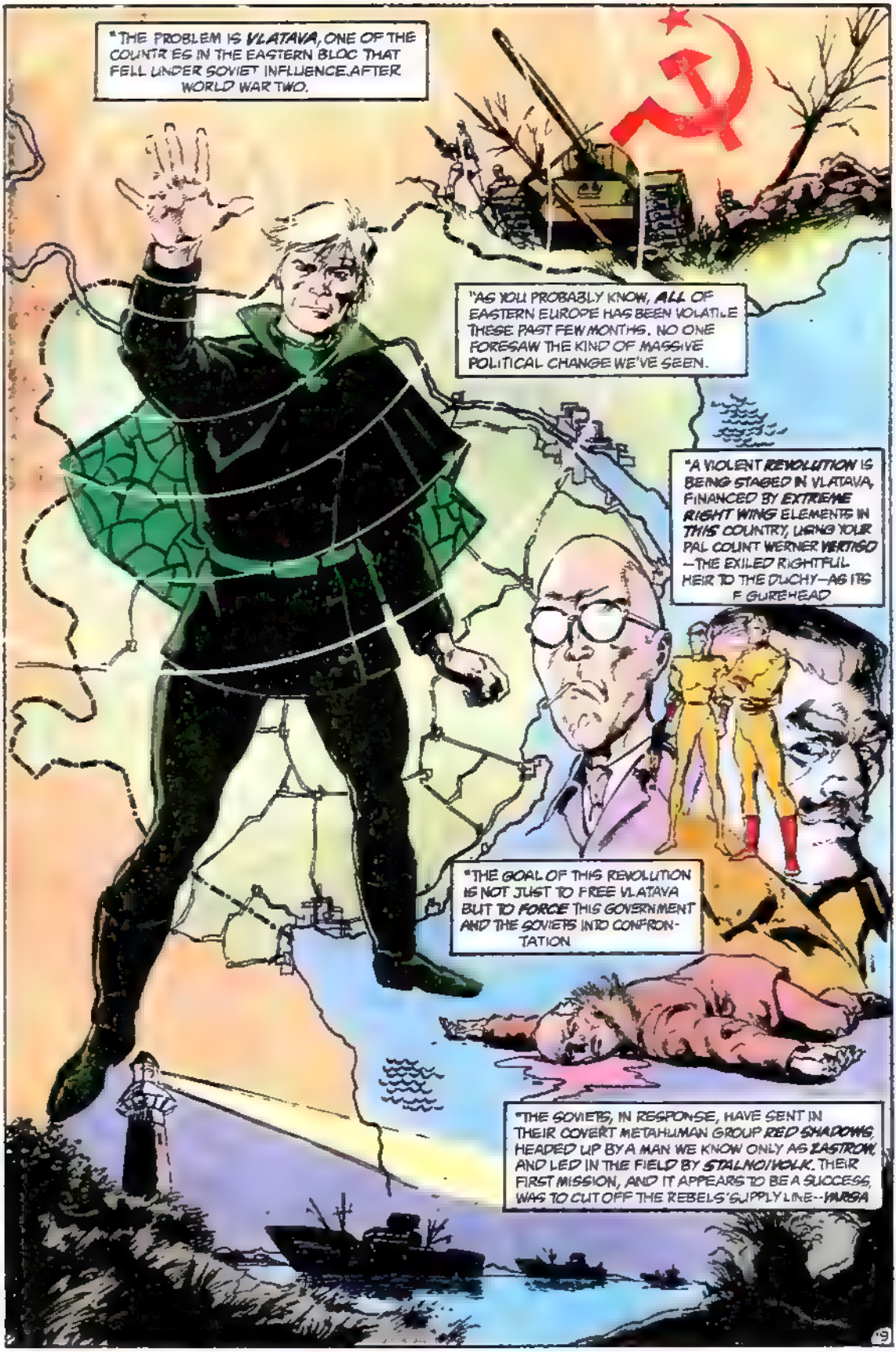
IF I HAD THE TIME, I WOULD ENJOY DESTROYING YOU.
AS IT IS...
THIS ISN'T OVER, GORT! WHEREVER YOU GO—I'LL FOLLOW AND I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD!
NO YOU WON'T, HERO.
STEEL!
YOU'RE OUT OF THIS, BATMAN
OR WE'LL FIND OUT JUST HOW SECRET YOUR "SECRET IDENTITY" IS WHEN THE GOVERNMENT REALLY PUTS ITS MIND TO FINDING OUT
17

WALLER DID THAT ONCE. NO MORE.
YOU GIVE ME REASONS OR I'LL MAKE IT MY BUSINESS TO FIND OUT YOUR SECRETS. ANY BETS ON WHO FINDS OUT MORE--FASTER?

WAIT. LET'S START OVER. LOOK, I'M UP AGAINST SOMETHING BIG, AND I NEED HELP. CAN YOU MAKE A SMALL TRIP WITH ME?
WHERE?


"DOWN TO LOUISIANA. I'VE GOT A BREAKFAST DATE WITH A FAT LADY IN BELLE REVE PRISON.
"HOW DO YOU LIKE THE TASTE OF CROW?"


THE GOVERNMENT HAS A PROBLEM--A SERIOUS ONE. THE BEST SOLUTION WOULD BE THE SUICIDE SQUAD. BUT THE SQUAD DOESN'T EXIST...PRESENTLY.
SO WE MAY HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT FIRST.
TELL ME YOUR PROBLEM


"THE PROBLEM IS VLATAVA, ONE OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE EASTERN BLOC THAT FELL UNDER SOVIET INFLUENCE AFTER WORLD WAR TWO.
"AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, ALL OF EASTERN EUROPE HAS BEEN VOLATILE THESE PAST FEW MONTHS. NO ONE FORESAW THE KIND OF MASSIVE POLITICAL CHANGE WE'VE SEEN.
"A VIOLENT REVOLUTION IS BEING STAGED IN VLATAVA, FINANCED BY EXTREME RIGHT WING ELEMENTS IN THIS COUNTRY, USING YOUR PAL COUNT WERNER VERTIGO —THE EXILED RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE DUCHY—AS ITS FIGUREHEAD
"THE GOAL OF THIS REVOLUTION IS NOT JUST TO FREE VLATAVA BUT TO FORCE THIS GOVERNMENT AND THE SOVIETS INTO CONFRONTATION
"THE SOVIETS, IN RESPONSE, HAVE SENT IN THEIR COVERT METAHUMAN GROUP RED SHADOWS, HEADED UP BY A MAN WE KNOW ONLY AS ZASTROW, AND LED IN THE FIELD BY STALNO/WOLK. THEIR FIRST MISSION, AND IT APPEARS TO BE A SUCCESS, WAS TO CUT OFF THE REBELS' SUPPLY LINE--VARSA

VARGA WAS A PATRIOT.
MAYBE HE WAS, BUT HIS FELLOW CONSPIRATORS USED HIM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES.
THIS SMALL CABAL REACHES INTO ALL LEVELS OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRIAL SECTORS. I DON'T KNOW WHO I CAN TRUST— EVEN IN MY OWN OFFICE!
THEY'RE TRYING TO FORCE OUR GOVERNMENT INTO OPEN CONFLICT WITH THE RUSSIANS. GORBACHEV RIGHT NOW HAS HIS HANDS FULL TRYING TO CONTROL HIS OWN HARDLINERS.
OUR GOVERNMENT WANTS TO AVOID CONFRONTATION BUT AT THE SAME TIME, WE CAN'T BE SEEN TO WORK AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE OSTENSIBLY WORKING AS FREEDOM FIGHTERS.
AND IT MIGHT BE NICE TO LET THE VLATAVANG CHOOSE THEIR OWN PATH--AS THE HUNGARIANS AND THE POLES AND THE EAST GERMANS HAVE DONE.
WE NEED YOU, WALLER. WE NEED THE SQUAD.
WHAT ARE YOUR TERMS?
REAL EASY. I'M OUT NOW— NO STRINGS. PRESIDENTIAL PARDON.
I GET ACCESS TO PRISONERS WITH THE SAME DEAL AS BEFORE. BATMAN HELPS ME ON THIS CASE OK--AND YOU GIVE ME A MILLION DOLLARS.

YOU'RE CRAZY
THE NEW SQUAD WILL BE AUTONOMOUS--WE'LL HIRE OUT ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. THE MILLION IS OUR FEE. THE CLIENT COVERS OUR EXPENSES
THEY HAVE NO CONTROL BUT THEY ALSO HAVE REDUCED LIABILITY
THE SQUAD GETS NO MORE HEADQUARTERS, NO MORE SUPPORT OR PROTECTION, NO RESCUE IN CASE OF CAPTURE
EVEN AT A MILLION, WE'RE CHEAP. AND WE'RE EXPENDABLE. AND WE'RE JUST WHAT YOU WANT. RIGHT?

OKAY. YOU GOT IT.

HOW 'BOUT YOU, TALL, DARK AND BROODING? YOU PLAYING?
I'M NOT SURE. I DON'T LIKE YOU, WALLER. I DON'T LIKE THE WAY YOU OPERATE. WHY DO YOU NEED ME?

I NEED YOU TO HELP ME TRACK DOWN SOME OF THE PEOPLE I WANT IN THIS SQUAD. AND MAYBE HELP *CONVINCE* THEM TO JOIN.
IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I DO, YOU CAN SPLIT.
IF I DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, I MAY *SHUT YOU DOWN.*
FAIR ENOUGH. YOU IN?
FOR NOW.

FINE. LET'S GET CUTTING. LIFE IS SHORT AND NONE OF US ARE GETTING ANY *PRETTIER.*
LET'S GO FIND THE *SUICIDE SQUAD.*

NEXT: ***PAWNS!***

SUICIDE NOTES

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L-5508

Dear John, Kim, Dan, and Bob,

The death of Dr. Light came as a great surprise to me. I'm not sure why, since we all know death is a central theme of this series. I suppose what I'm shocked about is that the slaying of his character is what I believe to be the first death of a somewhat major villain within these pages. Arthur Light held a rich spot within the DC Universe that no one else can ever fill. He had a rich history with the Fearsome Five as well as with the Teen Titans. No other character who has died on a Squad mission was as recognizable as Dr. Light. Slipknot, Shrike, Mindboggler, Blockbuster, Psi, even Rick Flag ... none of these characters have really made any significant impact in other books, or in the DC Universe as a whole. This marks the distinction of Dr. Light's demise. And now you've got me really worried that if the Catwoman joins, who knows if her number is gonna come up? I am in no way angry about Arthur's death. As a matter of fact, I'm sorta glad he was given such a befitting end. He never did endear himself to me. Admittedly, he was an original character, but also an almost entirely ludicrous one. Anyway, as far as I'm concerned, any child-murderer *deserves* to be shredded like so much cheddar cheese.

Flo's swan song affected me much more deeply. Although I've been expecting her to die ever since Lashina took her, I wasn't prepared to feel the pang in my stomach when I realized she was actually gone. She was an innocent victim, blinded by an emotion she couldn't control. Poor Ben. I can already hear him blaming himself for her death. I wonder how this will now affect his relationship with Mari? In any event, I hope she is not forgotten too quickly. Perhaps now you can bring Barbara Gordon in to replace her? It would only be fitting, since the two of them had become friends through Barbara's identity as Oracle.

Overall, this issue was very good. I especially liked Vertigo's assassination of Kanto, and I was relieved to discover the Count was not mortally wounded, as he is my favorite Squad member. The only thing I didn't like was that there were too many characters crammed into this one issue and we really didn't get a chance to see exactly how everybody fared at the end of the final battle. What happened to Boomerang was slightly ambiguous, as was the final fate of Bernadeth. Was she completely resurrected to normal, or is she just a zombie, or what? I, myself, was hoping she'd stay dead. Then again, we don't always get everything we want, do we?

David J. Harrington
255 C John Burke Drive
Glens Falls, NY 12801

Bernadeth has been resurrected to her Apokoliptian norm, but has now lost face—stature—within the command of Darkseid. She has a lot to atone for, and will no doubt seek revenge against Lashina. And so it goes.

One of the things we always felt helped make the SQUAD a book unlike most others is that our status quo is in a constant state of flux, and we have a real sense of danger when characters go on missions. Slipknot lost an arm, Dr. Light and Flo lost their lives, and Rick Flag made the ultimate sacrifice. The team has been through a lot of changes in just 40 issues. But while Dr. Light's passing was surprising, don't think he's forgotten. Why, he even made an appearance last issue!

*****

Dear Dan,

Just had to write and tell you what a blockbuster this Apokolips storyline has been! I've been completely glued to this saga since it began, although I can't believe it actually began in issue #3.

SUICIDE SQUAD #36 was a tremendous conclusion, but I must say the little interlude in Hell was quite bizarre. I'm glad to see Dr. Light gone, though. He was just too much of an idiot. He made Boomerang look like a rocket scientist! I really hope that Vertigo survived his battle with Kanto. He's much too great a villain to kill off. The highlight of this epic had to be the battle between Amanda and Granny. Even though Amanda was out of her league, she put up a hell of a fight. And besides, who would ever have thought we would get to see this?

Geof Isherwood is an excellent inker. He works well with both John K. Snyder and Luke McDonnell. The art in issues #33-36 was first class all the way.

I hope Deadshot's back to stay. Keep Poison Ivy around, too. Bring back Nemesis!

For future members: Matter Master, Black Spider, Dr. Polaris, Wildcat (whatever happened to her?) and Black Lightning. For guest-stars, how about Hawk & Dove, the Atom, and the JLA.

Robert Knuist
Mountain View, CA

Some interesting choices for membership. Matter Master has a certain appeal. Dr. Polaris just got creamed in STARMAN #17-18, so maybe. Wildcat is actually rock journalist Yolanda Montez, and she has spent the last few months touring with first the Steelwheels Express and then Paul McCartney. The Atom, you say? Hmmmmm....

*****

Dear Bob,

Sometimes, as in #36 with Doctor Light, it is quite obvious that the member died. But Count Vertigo looks like he might have died, too, though he must not have, since on the letters page you mentioned that in future months we would get a closer look at him. Gee, after an epic like this, you almost need a casualty list to make sure who lived.

Melissa Page
236 New Salem Loop
Nortonville, KY 42442

For the record, here's the scorecard from the Apokolips story: Dr. Light, deceased. Flo Crawly, deceased. Sheba, destroyed. Briscoe, deceased. Bernadeth, dead but resurrected. Kanto, dead but resurrected. Count Vertigo, injured. Captain Boomerang, injured. Shade, returned to Meta. Lashina, returned to leadership of the Female Furies. Dan Raspler, out to lunch.

*****

Dear Dan,

And so it goes. Another one bites the dust. And another one. Odd that during this title's run, I've encouraged you to stress the "suicide" part. After all, these people were journeying on missions where all were expendable and none were expected to survive.

And yet, here comes issue #36. The moment I saw Dr. Light spotlighted on the cover, I thought, "Oh no." Oh, yes. John and Kim develop this character over several months only to give him a final fate. And Flo...! I should have seen that one coming.

only it was too late. The sacrificial lamb? It appears so.

I finally got what I'd been requesting. And it did put a certain risk and uncertainty back in the Squad's adventures. Then why does it feel so hollow? Sometimes getting just what you think you want may just be a disillusioning experience.

Mark Lucas
1100 Granville Avenue #2
Los Angeles, CA 90049

*****

Dear Everyone,

I enjoyed SUICIDE SQUAD #36. I especially liked the subplot with Jacob Smith and the trick he pulled on Doctor Light. Was that Amanda in the panel with the villains on page 3? I was also glad Count Vertigo survived (I think); I really like the character. Taking a dagger out of one's chest and still being able to walk is an impressive feat. I liked seeing Nightshade back, too; I look forward to her possible mini-series.

Regarding comments on Father Craemer's use of "Her" in SS #31: I was extremely pleased to find such an enlightened and accepting attitude on the part of a priest. It really increased my respect for him. After the help and advice he's given Eve, I strongly doubt that she "wouldn't give him the time of day." I want to applaud not only John and Kim for writing it, but the editorial staff as well.

Steve Zwanger
212 1903 Hall
Princeton, NJ 08544

Yes, that was Amanda.

*****

Dear Editor,

If nothing else, this conclusion of the Lashina plot was very surprising. I did not expect the deaths of Flo, Briscoe or Dr. Light and I am not too sure if Boomer and Vertigo will survive. Why this sudden purge of the ranks, I wonder? I do congratulate you for being realistic, though, because of late every match with Darkseid has ended in a draw without our heroes losing a single life.

And now what? How will Flo's death affect Amanda? How will it affect Oracle? Will Bronze Tiger blame himself? You've opened up a huge can of worms and I am eagerly awaiting some answers.

Edward Little
64-33 99th Park Street
Rego Park, NY 11374

*****

Dear John, Kim, and Fourth Worlders,

Well, the "Final Battle" on Apokolips is over after four of the most harrowing issues of this series! How ironic that Darkseid was the one to halt the melee, and send the Earthers back home. If only he'd arrived sooner. Lashina got her just desserts, but Flo's death, while not totally unexpected, was made all the more sad by the tender moments with Amanda on pages 21-22. Dr. Light's death was a complete surprise, and a rather strange one at that, as was stated. In fact, pages 16-19 make me wonder if the Squad will be up against a supernatural menace, and if these scenes have anything to do with the Loa. The Squad hasn't dealt directly with the occult since their visit to Nightshade's dimension. I also enjoyed the Squad's reluctant "visit" to Jack Kirby's Fourth World because we got to see a lot of characters here that haven't appeared in the newest run of NEW GODS or MISTER MIRACLE. Amanda's clash with Granny Goodness is already a classic in my book.

I'm still undecided about Geof Isherwood's inks on John K. Snyder's pencils, but I know I did like the panels that featured close-ups of characters' faces and the supernatural events. Overall, I'd say the "hideous strength" of the artwork on this mini-series within a series has been the full-page and double-page spreads of Armaghetto and the like. The cityscapes shown to us readers gave us an idea of what Despair would look like if it were actually a physical place.

Neil Ahlquist
1100 Washington Street NE Apt. #2
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Hey, Neil: what do you think of Geof Isherwood's inks over Geof Isherwood? And what do you think of the poster?

*****

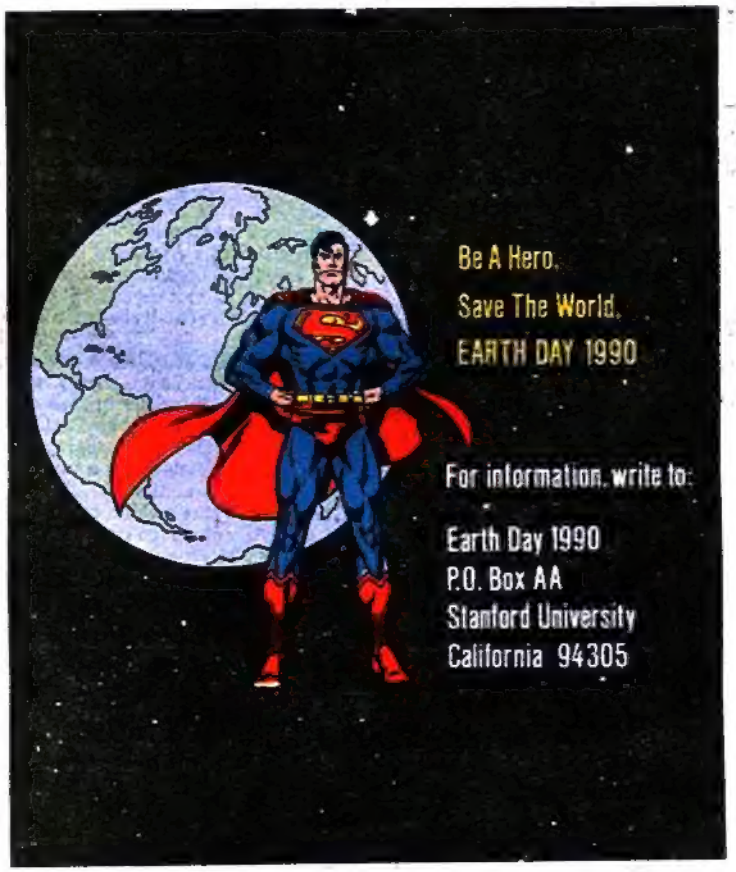
WHEN SUDDENLY THERE WAS A NEXT ISSUE BOX:

"The Phoenix Gambit" Part Two continues to raise the stakes as global tensions rise. The Red Shadows are pressed into service and we get to see them strut their stuff. Meantime, Batman *and* Amanda Waller set about to recreate the Suicide Squad. Who will be on the new team? The poster this month gives you a clue but everything is not as it seems, and we certainly don't know if they will be ready in time to save America. We also don't know if everyone will survive the mission and what happens to those who do. John, Kim, and Geof have some idea, but they're not even telling Dan until the story unfolds. Don't miss it!

Meanwhile, Dan recommends you try out FIRESTORM as John and Tom Mandrake build up a story that will take Firestorm literally out of this world as we get closer to our 100th issue. Now's a good time to get a good seat for the ride.

We'll see you next month—won't we? Until then, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger



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